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AND THEN CAME THE STORM

By

HENRY H. HARPER





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AND THEN CAME THE STORM

BY H. H. HARPER

I had written a few books and biographical essays, not because I needed the meager financial return they brought me, for I had a comfortable income from investments. Having received a long delayed inheritance from my mother's estate in Virginia, I retired from active business early in life and lived comfortably — even luxuriously — on a large country estate stocked with cattle, horses, chickens and a large orchard. Eventually I had discovered that after an active life, “loafing” is not the happy-go-lucky state that it is cracked up to be; so I took up writing and farming as an occupational pastime.

A book collector in a large mid-western city who had read one of my books, wrote asking if I would inscribe the volume for him, which I was glad to do, without realizing what an important link this proved to be in the chain of future events. He took great pride in owning nearly a hundred thousand volumes — the

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largest collection of inscribed books in this country. We corresponded for some time and I was the means of procuring for him a number of scarce items he prized very highly. One day I received a letter from him saying that his daughter was on her way to Boston to visit the family of an old college-mate of his, and asked if I would kindly look her up and show her some of the "interesting sights of the cultural metropolis." I thought to myself, this is probably some bespectacled, bookish dame, but seeing it was about Christmas-time, when she would be away from the holiday festivities at home, I didn't want to be accused of being a cold-footed, inhospitable Bostonian, so I decided to phone, ask her to lunch with me and give her the "once-over." When she answered the call I told her of her father's letter and invited her to meet me in the library at the Hotel Touraine.

"Just a moment, please," she said, then after a pause of a minute or so, she answered, "Yes, thank you, I shall be happy to meet you."

"Thank you," I said, "if you are as charming as your cheery musical voice, our happiness will be mutual."

When I knew her better she told me that, suspecting me to be some bald-headed, be-whiskered bookworm that her daddy had struck

up an epistolary acquaintance with, before giving her answer she consulted her hostess, who advised her there could be no great risk in taking a chance to "look him over."

When she met me at the hotel I was gratified to find that she was young, beautiful and vivacious. In the library, before going in to lunch, I learned from her that after graduating from one of New York's finishing schools she had recently returned from a trip around the world with her parents. Soon after we were seated at the table she cupped her chin in her palms and looked across at me appraisingly. "Now tell me all about yourself," she began.

"Well," I said, "If you happen to have read the book I inscribed for your father, there isn't much else to tell."

She dropped her hands and stared at me, wide-eyed. "*Don't* tell me that poor little motherless Bob Hardwick was anything but a figment of your imagination!"

"It's the gospel truth," I said. "But if I remember correctly there was a little episode I forgot to mention in the book. One day, when I was seven years old, my father lashed me furiously with a blacksnake whip for some misdemeanor of which I was not guilty. The injustice of it made me so mad that I tried to figure out how to get even with him. I had

heard him repeat the proverb, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' and on that basis I figured that he deserved to lose something very dear to him. So I hit upon the idea of doing away with his brand new Sunday hat. Accordingly, one day when he was away I got the hat out, put a brick in it and dropped it into the well. I had the satisfaction of knowing that to his dying day he worried about what became of that hat."

She laughed and shook her head. "All I can say is, to have survived those childhood ordeals you must have been under the guardian care of your mother's spirit."

"Yes, I believe that. And after all, now that it's all over I'm not sorry it happened that way. Those childhood experiences help me now to appreciate the better things. If it be true, as some sage has declared, that life usually provides a balanced ration of happiness and misery, I'm glad Dame Fortune exhausted her spleen on me before I grew up."

During the next two weeks it was too cold to do much sight-seeing, but we spent many pleasant hours together, theatre-going, dining, and other indoor diversions. Then one day I learned, to my dismay, that she and her hostess were soon to leave for New York to visit some of her erstwhile classmates and take in the

theatres. It was a gloomy day for me when I saw them off at the train, after which I returned to my apartment where I usually spent the winter months. Although no words of love had passed between us we had many tastes in common, such as dancing, theatre-going, card-playing (she was an expert at auction bridge), backgammon, music and other diversionary pursuits. In fact, I made up my mind that of all the women I knew she was the one who measured up nearest to my ideal. Cheerful, attractive, accomplished, companionable and altogether appealing. In short, she was the girl I had been waiting for, and I would follow her to New York. I wrote her several letters to the hotel where she and her chaperon-hostess were staying, and while her letters were cordial enough, they were brief and lacked the warmth and affectionate tenor of my more lengthy letters to her. Just as I was about to entrain for New York to see how matters stood between us, her hostess (who had returned home) called me on the phone and in great distress announced that our Marguerite had become tentatively engaged to marry the forty-year-old uncle of one of her old classmates. "I am just shocked half to death," she screeched. "He's almost old enough to be her father; and *a man of his age who has never married must have some-*

thing the matter with him! Isn't there something you can do about it?"

"You say they're only tentatively engaged?"

"Yes, before accepting his ring she made it a condition that he visit her family. Marguerite is simply crazy to live in New York, and that must be her reason for wanting to marry a New York man. But think of it — that beautiful young girl throwing herself away on an old man!"

And so all my fond hopes went glimmering. I finished by saying she was of age, and if her folks approved of her choice there was nothing we could do about it. Being almost forty years old myself I doubted if my informant would consider me a more desirable suitor than the one Marguerite had chosen. Therefore I had no preventive action to suggest.

Time dragged lazily on for some weeks during which I blamed myself for being such a stupid slow worker in love matters. My forty-year-old competitor in New York had outdistanced me and snatched the prize I had allowed to slip away from me. I had done all I could to ingratiate myself, but after all, a man of forty is not supposed to be hasty in declaring his love for a young girl, who might reasonably consider him presumptuous. During our short acquaintance in Boston I had told the young lady

of a ranch I owned in southeastern Mexico in the immediate vicinity of productive oil wells, and already I had leased a thousand acres on a royalty basis to a syndicate who intended to exploit the land. And after some weeks following Marguerite's return home, when I had about reconciled myself to the existing state of affairs, I was astonished one morning to receive a wee note from her, asking if I didn't think there was a likelihood of discovering oil in the vicinity where she lived. There were no oil wells within a thousand miles of her home town, and I was a bit puzzled to know what she meant. Was it a hint for me to visit her? I answered that I was quite content to leave the job of boring oil wells to others and concluded by wishing her much happiness in her marital life. Her prompt reply was that she was not contemplating any marital entanglements; that the man she had met in New York had visited her family and shortly thereafter he packed up and went home. She went on to say that he was an executive in a big industrial plant. "He was a sort of Jekyll and Hyde character. When I first met him he showed only his best and most engaging side, but when he came to visit us his idea was to impress my family with his great importance — to show them what a wonderful match their daughter could make. Indeed this

transition made him seem almost an utter stranger to me."

Questioned by her father, the man grudgingly admitted that he had been married and divorced. "A fact that he forgot to tell me," she added. After a couple of days the mother turned thumbs down on him. She decided that he was "too dictatorial, too cocksure, too possessive — and *far too old*." The mention of this latter defect gave me quite a shock. After exchanging a few letters Marguerite persuaded her mother to write, asking me to visit them. For some time I pondered whether it was worth-while taking the chance of undergoing the mother's inspection and perhaps sharing the fate of my predecessor; but finally I decided there was nothing to lose, and possibly much to gain. The girl seemed to have a mind of her own, and even if the family disapproved there was still a chance.

When I arrived the mother received me graciously, and being thus momentarily reassured I proceeded to press my suit.

Marguerite's father was a hard-headed, calculating businessman. In conversation with him I learned that his daughter had had three or four proposals from local boys, none of whom could support her in the way she had been accustomed to live. He had warned her

that if she married without his consent she would be entirely on her own, and needn't expect any support from the family. After spending thousands of dollars on her education and travels he thought she ought to have sense enough to marry someone who could provide for her. He was a czar in his own home. When he entered the house everyone stood at attention and toadied to him as if he were the supreme ruler of a realm. He had a dual personality. In many respects he was generous, humane and chicken-hearted. Usually he was hard, cynical and tyrannical. After a few days when we got better acquainted I kidded and bantered him jovially, and he loved it. I wasn't any more afraid of him than I was of Marguerite, who always humored him for the sake of family harmony. When he came home in the evening and planted himself in his big easy chair she'd say, "Papa darling, are you quite comfortable?" Then she would scurry about getting a sofa pillow for his back and a footstool for his feet.

Shortly after my arrival, one evening when the father and I were alone he looked at me cynically through his keen, penetrating blue eyes and asked what business I was in, "aside from dabbling in literature."

I didn't like that word "dabbling," so I shot back at him, "I'm a farmer."

His eyes widened. "A farmer!" he exploded. "Good Lord! What do you raise?"

"Most every thing that grows on a farm — cows, horses, chickens, pigs, turkeys, and a large orchard."

"Do you find it profitable?"

"No. I lose from four to five thousand dollars a year."

"Then why do you keep it up?"

"Because I like it. And besides, I have an efficient English butler and a housekeeper, to both of whom I'm greatly attached."

"Huh! An altruist, eh?" he grunted. At this juncture Marguerite joined us.

"Have you ever traveled?" her father asked.

"Not extensively, but I should like to travel throughout the world if I could find a congenial traveling-mate."

At that I looked at Marguerite, whose face lit up like a sunrise. Incidentally, I knew she had the "travel-itch" in its most virulent form. She had been all over Europe and spoke French fluently, after spending two years traveling and studying music in Paris.

Presently the father got up. "All right, Baby (he always called her Baby), I'll leave you with

your farmer friend to teach you all about how to raise chickens."

Marguerite's mother was a beautiful woman, with an independent fortune of her own. Indeed if she had been a widow and I had met her before meeting the daughter, I should have fallen in love with her at first sight. I took special pains to play up to her as if she were the one I adored instead of her daughter. If she had any misgivings about my age she kept them to herself. The daughter was as clever and tactful as the mother. She looked after my laundry, laid out my shirts with ties to match, and cuff-links inserted (I had two sets), attended to having my shoes shined, and a dozen other little attentions so new to me, and so dear to a man's heart. When we played cards, if the heat went down in the room, knowing that I was sensitive to cold she would get her fur coat and wrap it about my legs and feet. She could have found a blanket instead of her mink coat, which most people would consider too precious to be used in keeping a man's legs warm. There is a common saying that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. But the shorter and surer way to a man's heart — if he has any heart — is the treatment Marguerite practiced on me.

"Men are just grown-up children," she said. "They want to be loved and coddled and made

to think they are master in the home; but in a well-managed household they really have no more authority than a caged rabbit." I don't know how she ever got that idea in the home of a domineering parent, but as long as she felt that way I didn't raise the point. In fact, if she proved to be as sweet and considerate in the capacity of wife as she was as sweetheart I was quite willing to submit to her household authority. Her motto was, that it's easier to manage a man with love and diplomacy than it is to drive him by command. I had for so long been sole commander in my home that I felt it would be a novelty to let a diplomatic spouse take over the reins.

Marguerite was coquettish, and as playful as a kitten. Her mother said she had had a number of proposals, and for fear of hurting the swain's feelings she never actually refused any of them. She would simply laugh and change to another subject, or possibly invite them to her home to dine and talk with the family. The mother also told me that Marguerite was never even tentatively engaged to the New York man — that she liked him and wanted to find out what her parents thought of him.

I sometimes heard Marguerite kidding and flirting playfully with boys over the telephone; but always she refused their invitations, ex-

curring herself with one pretense or another — perhaps because she was too busy attending to me.

After we became engaged I asked her if she didn't think she was taking a long chance in marrying a man much older than herself.

"Not at all," she said. "You have at least thirty good years ahead of you, and that's as long as I care to live, anyway."

Then after our engagement was announced, I said to her, "Darling, you have a very jealous man on your hands (which was not wholly true), and I'm afraid that with your coquettish nature you'll cause me a lot of headaches."

She put her arms over my shoulders. "Now listen, my husband-to-be, if ever I do or say anything that makes you unhappy just tell me and I'll never repeat it again. And what's more, if I'm ever guilty of any great wrong I want to take my beating on the spot and have it over with."

She was honest, candid, open-hearted and unspoiled. She never approached you holding one hand behind her. She was a lively conversationalist, a good listener and always laughed at my jokes, no matter if she'd already heard them. She had no patience with women who think it's smart to speak derisively of their husbands in company. And jealousy was entirely

foreign to her nature. Once, at a rollicking party, long after we were married, when a girl flopped herself down onto my lap, Marguerite called to her, "Go to it, sister. If the girls like my husband it makes him all the more attractive to me."

Our courtship days would be considered rather static by those story-book lovers who squabble and deceive one another in order to conceal their innermost feelings. "I hate you, I despise you! Get out of my house and never show your face again!" the girl screeches melodramatically; yet all the while she is dying to have him take her in his arms and smother her with kisses. I never cared much for that kind of courtship. It takes too long for the combatants to get together. Lovers who are deceitful, secretive and quarrelsome before marriage are almost sure to be deceitful and quarrelsome after marriage. And the old saying that quarreling is compensated by the joy of making up afterwards is pure bunkum.

I didn't ask Marguerite if she would marry me. I merely asked if she didn't think it would be fun to get married. In answer she hugged and kissed me, which was all the answer I needed. It seems a safe way to propose, although in my case I felt reasonably sure the response would be favorable. But where there

is any doubt, if the girl is cool to the suggestion or asks for time to think it over, you have an easy way out by laughing it off as a crazy idea — a mere joke. A man who pleads and begs a girl to marry him is a mere novice in the fine art of lovemaking, and is usually rejected. Marriage being the natural outgrowth of mutual love, when two sensible people are in love with each other, if the man is at all bright he knows when and how to propose.

When I approached Marguerite's father to ask his permission, I scarcely knew how to begin. I felt somewhat like a bashful country schoolboy asking a peevish teacher for permission to "go out." Finally I managed to say, "I hope you are in a receptive mood."

He looked at me wonderingly. "What do you mean, receptive mood?"

"I mean that I have an important request to make."

"Well, spit it out. What is it?"

"I have come to ask the hand of your charming daughter."

"Oh — that's how it is. Is that all?"

"That's all I can think of just now."

For a moment he was silent. "You must know you ask a great deal in robbing me of my only child."

"Yes, I realize that, but you must remember

you have enjoyed her devotion for twenty-four years, and you'd still have the companionship of your charming, devoted wife. As much as your daughter would regret leaving you, she feels she must look to the future, the same as you did in getting married; and I'm sure you wouldn't deny her the opportunity of marrying the man she honestly professes to love."

He got up and rested his hand on my shoulder. "Well, since you put it that way, I suppose it's my duty to consent. But with the proviso that you'll love and care for her as I have."

"Thank you," I said, "I cheerfully accept that condition."

We were married the following fall, and the father certainly played the role of a real prince in making the affair a grand success. At the reception following the wedding there were nearly a hundred guests and almost everyone, including myself, got gloriously high on champagne. One guest after another insisted that I drink "bottoms up to Marguerite." The "bottoms up" were my undoing. Later in the evening I stumbled over a hassock and landed bottom up on the floor. I remember being carried upstairs by the butler and two slightly inebriated guests who threw me sprawling onto the bed. I remember, too, that my bride (cold so-

ber) stood over me giggling, while she applied cold compresses to my head.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"You, darling. You look as though you had been the chief mourner at an Irish wake."

"Hah! My charming wife was at her best last night — no, it must have been tonight. I saw a whole regiment of your old sweethearts lined up waiting to kiss the bride."

"No, dearest, you were seeing double. There were only ten."

"Is the party over? Has everybody gone home?" I asked.

"Yes, I think so — at least all who are able to travel." She leaned over and kissed me tenderly.

"Thank you, darling. Since you deign to soil your sweet lips on this drunken spouse, it's a sure test of your love."

"Now close your eyes, darling. I'll sit right here while you get some much needed sleep."

The next night we left for Chicago where we planned to spend a day or two before going to Virginia Hot Springs, and the following morning I went into the Blackstone flower shop to get a bouquet for Marguerite. There was a huge display of orchids, some with three blossoms to the stalk, others with two, and some with only one. I asked the price and the man

said, "Three dollars." I took one stalk with three, and not wishing to be piggish I selected one with two blossoms, and one with only one — figuring it would be nine dollars for the three. Then I had him make them up into a bouquet with a few lilies-of-the-valley. I handed him a twenty dollar bill and stood waiting for my change. He put the bill in the cash drawer and turned to me, rubbing his palms. "Thank you," he said, "call again."

I said, "Was that the correct amount?"

"Yes, three dollars per blossom and two dollars for the lilies-of-the-valley. Those lilies come pretty high nowadays." I thought so too.

We went to Virginia Hot Springs for two weeks, then to the Hotel Gotham in New York, where we stayed until after Christmas, doing all the theatres and one or two night clubs. Marguerite was always happy in New York. She actually purred the moment she got a whiff of the city's intoxicating atmosphere. She was also a zealous devotee of Paris and Monte Carlo. "New York, Paris and Monte Carlo," she said, "are the three places on earth that I love best — except the farm," she added as an afterthought merely to please me. She loved the very atmosphere inside of a New York theatre and always found some redeeming feature in a play even if it were an insipid "flop." In after

years she once remarked that she liked a sad play, because it gave her the only chance she ever had to feel sorry.

From New York we went to Palm Beach where I had engaged a housekeeping apartment for the winter. I joined a couple of clubs and we met several people of our acquaintance. We changed cooks twice and finally got one worse than the other two. A few days after installing our third dusky maid Marguerite decided to give a swell home dinner for four of our fashionable friends who had entertained us. We rented some elegant china and flat silver and Marguerite helped the girl get the porter-house steak and all the fixings into apple-pie-order. She's an excellent cook — that is, my wife, not the new maid. The dinner was a triumphant success. But when it came to the desert something awful happened. The maid served the ice cream in *finger bowls*!

We arrived at the farm in May during apple-blossom time, the most glorious season of the year — for me. The orchard in full bloom surrounding the house on all sides was a picture of splendid — almost unearthly — beauty. We spent a busy summer, during which Marguerite rearranged all the furniture and added a dozen or so new pieces. She made new window draperies, sofa cushions, lampshades, hem-

stitched sheets, napkins and pillowcases, and never once complained of loneliness. When I asked if she were happy at the farm she said, "You love the place, darling, and little as I care for the country, I'll gladly spend the summers here with you if you'll take me gallivanting in the winter. In other words, I'll live with you in summer and you'll live with me in winter."

I had promised to make her happy, and I meant to keep my promise, no matter what the cost. I used to say to her, "Happy?" and she'd answer, "M-m-m-m-mm — so happy!"

Marguerite went over the house, upstairs and down, with pencil and memorandum book making notes of contemplated changes and improvements. I watched her with curious interest, wondering if she planned on tearing down the partitions and revamping the entire house. First, all my deer-heads, stuffed birds and other precious relics were snatched from their places, consigned to the attic, and forgotten — by her, at least. But I figured that the dislodgement of these silent trophies was trivial compared to what I gained by her sweet, cheerful companionship. I recalled her remark, that a man has no more authority in his own home than a caged rabbit. (At least she had forewarned me). But I didn't mind it as long as it made her happy. She was as busy as a bee in a buckwheat field.

Eventually she had painters, plasterers, paper-hangers, carpenters, stone-masons and plumbers swarming all over the place. The breakfast room was all done over in pink and grey, with a huge bay window built in at the southeast corner to let in the morning sun. Downstairs partitions were torn out and three small rooms were converted into a forty-foot living room with beamed ceiling, and a six-foot fieldstone fireplace at each end. One of the smaller bedrooms was converted into a bathroom with sunken tub. She had a lavender bathroom, I had a pink bathroom and the guest bathroom was in pale blue. Six bedrooms were being repapered, the ceilings calcimined and all the floors were scraped and waxed. The Oriental rugs slipped about on them as if they were on skids. I nearly broke my neck one night as I was hurrying to answer the telephone. A small rug slid out under my feet and I went sprawling across the room, striking my head against the base of a big marble pedestal.

"Aren't we having fun!" Marguerite chuckled one day while the uproar was going on.

"Yes," I said, "the old joint has come to life with a bang. When you finish with the house if there are any changes you would like to make in the barn, let me know."

I meant it for a jovial remark, but she didn't

take it that way. She looked suddenly hurt and her eyes grew misty. "I don't believe you half appreciate what I'm doing. And I'm doing it all for you, because I love you so," she whimpered.

I took her in my arms and kissed her tears away. "Please forgive me for that nasty remark, which sounded much worse than I intended. You precious darling, you're doing a wonderful, *wonderful* job and I'm so crazy about you that I wouldn't care a damn if you tore the whole house to pieces, just so you leave a roof over our heads." Then she smiled and kissed me.

With that season's expenses I could have bought and stocked a farm, with money to spare, but as she said, it was fun — for her. Albeit, I considered the money well spent. Once, in the midst of the remodelling turmoil, I said to her, "Darling, don't you ever get tired of having an idle man about your neck and under your feet day and night?"

"Don't bother me with such nonsense when I'm busy." And off she went to give orders in some other part of the house. About the only times she ever scolded me was when I crushed and stirred my ice cream to soften it. She liked hers frozen hard.

At the end of the season Marguerite said,

"Darling, you *do* like the changes I have made, don't you?"

"Yes, sweetheart, I'm simply nuts about everything you've done; but please don't change my comfortable bed for some newfangled sleeping device."

Early in October we took an apartment in New York where we had a round of theatre-going, bridge parties, concerts and Grand Opera. The latter often bored me, though Marguerite loved it, so I endured it. Among the pleasant people who came to our parties, there was the scintillating "Bill" Haskell, an old-time sweetheart who used to take Marguerite sled-riding in their childhood days. The only sign of jealousy that Marguerite ever showed was one day while we were window-shopping along Fifth Avenue. I very injudiciously called her attention to a pair of shapely feminine calves just ahead of us.

"You should worry about women's legs," she snapped. Then she looked up with a smile, as much as to say, "I didn't really mean that," and squeezed my arm.

In January we went to Paris for six whirligig weeks, then to Monte Carlo, where we were joined by Marguerite's father and mother. We often dined at the casino across from the Hotel de Paris. The gigolos would ask me (they never

ask the girl first, always her escort) if they might dance with "Mademoiselle," who was supposed to give them ten francs or so for each dance. (Francs were ten cents at that time). Marguerite danced several times with them. After I had danced a few times with her she insisted that I dance with some of the professional dancing girls.

"Nothing doing," I said. "They can't talk English and I can't talk French."

"There," she said, pointing to a beautiful young girl on the floor, wearing a fluffy white wig and tripping about as light as a feather in the wind, "when she finishes this dance go up and say to her, *Pardon moi, Mademoiselle — mais voulez dansé avec moi?*"

I wasn't sure of the meaning of all this, but doubtless it meant that I wanted to dance with the girl; so I rehearsed the speech several times, then a little later when the young lady was seated at a nearby table I edged cautiously up to her, but not a word of that darned speech could I remember. So I said, "Excuse me — I don't suppose you speak English?"

She looked up and smiled. "Oh yes, I speak English very well. I am an English girl."

I invited her to our table and introduced her to the family. My father-in-law furbished up his vocabulary and took quite a shine to the

beautiful dancer. And Marguerite was so charmed with her that she asked her to dine with us. We spent a pleasant evening together, during which the girl declined many invitations to dance with others. I danced with her a few times and she refused to accept a fee. When I insisted she uttered a positive "*No!* This is for good old England. God bless America!"

Early in April we sailed for Bermuda for a three weeks stay. At this time Marguerite was three months along with her first baby and by the middle of May we all four were at the farm, where "Daddy and Mama" spent six happy weeks with us. And contrary to the average run of feminine in-laws, my mother-in-law was the most lovable friend I ever had. Marguerite having kept me in such a dizzy whirl from one place to another, I was glad to get back home where I could settle down, collect my senses, sleep in my own bed, and get some good home-cooked food. It was a quiet summer during which Marguerite enjoyed the best of health and high spirits, wondering the while what sort of offspring she would produce. She wanted a boy, and eventually that's what she got.

Marguerite decided to place herself under the care of a doctor in New York who had attended her in her student days. She spent many hours with a seamstress preparing a huge bas-

sinet, with tiny lavender pillow, lavender ribbons streaming from the handle and on all sides, lavender linings, lavender blanket, lavender all over. (Lavender was her favorite color.) It was carefully done up in frail tissue wrappings, secured by safety pins. On October first, a short time before the "great event," we entrained for New York and, entering the Pullman car, filled with passengers, Marguerite marched down the aisle followed by me carrying the bassinet. Then a terrible thing happened. The tissue wrapping caught on something, tearing it all off and I marched along behind with the lavender ribbons fluttering in all directions. The passengers tittered gleefully, and as if this were not embarrassing enough, some unregenerate wag behind me chirped, "I hope she don't drop it on the train!"

At the maternity hospital Marguerite was assigned to a young nurse who cheerfully announced that two of her last three patients had died in childbirth. A couple of months later when we returned to Boston with our eight-pound baby and an English nurse we found at the hospital, our winter apartment was undergoing repairs, so we moved into a little nearby sparsely furnished dump for a few days. One day I received an urgent telephone call at my

club, and Marguerite was on the wire in great alarm.

"Oh, darling, come quick! I'm afraid our baby is dying!"

I said, "Call Dr. Smith, the famous baby specialist, and I'll be right up."

When I arrived the nurse and maid were both out for a few hours and Marguerite was alone with the baby, who was goo-gooing and kicking up his toes gleefully. Presently the doctor arrived and after examining the baby thoroughly he turned to the anxiously waiting mother and said, "Well, madam, I've seldom seen a healthier baby."

"But doctor, he threw up a lot of curdly stuff and stared up at the ceiling as if he were looking for God."

The doctor laughed heartily. "That happens to all healthy babies when they're overfed."

After glancing about the shabby apartment the doctor picked up his bag and left.

"Well, darling," I said, "it's worth the fifty dollar fee (that, I had heard, was his customary charge for a call and examination) to quiet your fears."

"It certainly is. I wouldn't care if he charges a hundred."

The first of next month I received the doc-

tor's bill for *five dollars*! Marguerite laughed. "I guess he thought that was all we had."

A few weeks later the baby developed some sort of rash and Marguerite had the chauffeur drive them, accompanied by the nurse, down to the doctor's office for inspection; and when we got his bill for that office visit it was for thirty-five dollars.

When our boy was six years old we took him to Europe and visited many historic places. Up to that time the boy had never been punished but once, when he was two years old. He had been playing with a toy engine, throwing it about the room. His mother said, "No, *no*, darling, you *must not* do that!" Whereupon he picked up the toy and laughingly smashed it through the window pane. She turned him over and spanked him soundly with a hair brush. Instead of crying or resenting it he put his arms about her and kissed her. Neither of us ever punished him after that. He never needed it. At the age of seven we placed him in boarding school and sailed for Cherbourg. On the previous visit to Paris it had rained or snowed for days and days, but this time when we reached Cherbourg it was a bright sunny day. As we were disembarking I said, "I'll bet it will be snowing in Paris."

"Oh hush! Don't be a killjoy."

Arriving in Paris late at night we were tired and went early to bed. Next morning Marguerite was up at dawn, long before I got up. I heard her scampering about preparing to go out, anxious to enjoy the morning air in her dearly beloved Paris. About eight o'clock she came in while I was shaving. "Well, darling, did you have a pleasant walk?"

She sniffled into her handkerchief two or three times and wiped her little red nose, looking the picture of misery.

"What's the matter, dear?"

"It's *snowing*! — and it's all your fault," she whimpered.

It is doubtful if any man was ever more abundantly blessed, with a wonderful little pal for a wife and a healthy promising boy. I often wondered if such happiness could last. Happily, however, I was not able to foresee the future.

When our boy finished primary school he entered St. Mark's at Southboro, where I had registered him at birth. He had a peculiar accident there. A baseball struck him on the right side of his nose, knocking it badly askew. Then after a few days while waiting for a surgeon from Boston to perform a corrective operation, he was engaged in a hockey game where a flying puck caught his nose on the other side and

knocked it back into its natural position. Graduating from St. Mark's he entered Yale at the age of seventeen. Four years later he was graduated with honors and entered Law School. While at Yale he spent many week-ends at home, usually with a group of his classmates, together with several students from Harvard who had been his buddies at St. Mark's. Although we had six bedrooms, Marguerite and I often doubled up in one room and the boys sometimes had to sleep two in a bed. Our backyard looked like a public parking lot.

During the intervening winters Marguerite and I traveled everywhere — to Europe several times, to Bermuda, Mexico, Nassau, Havana, Jerusalem, the West Indies, Palm Beach (five winters), California, once to Hawaii, and the Lord only knows where else. In fact we were always on the go from October to May. She led me a galloping pace. As time went on I became a bit surfeited with this sort of nomadic life, but I couldn't tell *her* that. Truth is, I never could quite understand why people will leave the best country in the world to gad about and suffer hardships in strange lands with strange languages, strange customs, strange food, and oftentimes uncomfortable modes of conveyance — not to mention wretchedly inadequate heating facilities. In many countries we

put up with miserable hotel accommodations and all sorts of weather. In Jerusalem we slept in our fur coats, and in Calcutta we nearly died of the heat. We slept in stuffy rooms on musty, lumpy mattresses that felt as if they were stuffed with corncobs. We ate sloppy food, drank dishwater coffee, without cream or sugar — no butter — tainted meat, and so on and on ad infinitum — privations and discomforts undreamed of at home. In Jerusalem, just after World War I, the food was so unpalatable that it beggars description. The only things we felt safe in eating were their Jaffa oranges and boiled eggs, not much larger than pigeons' eggs; and they looked as if they'd been boiled in muddy water. At breakfast one morning when I suggested that they looked suspiciously like buzzards' eggs, Marguerite refused to touch another one; and so, cold and hungry, we got out of town and back to the excursion steamer waiting in the harbor of Haifa — glad to escape from the motley horde of camels, donkeys and slovenly specimens of humanity milling about and rubbing shoulders in the middle of the narrow, crowded, ill-smelling passageways called streets.

Noting the scarcity of Jewish people in the city, I had remarked to the English clerk in the hotel, that Jerusalem was supposed to be the

home of the Jews. "Where do they keep themselves?" I asked.

He grinned. "Can you blame 'em for not wanting to be pushed about in this town's heterogeneous rabble?"

We arrived at Saville, Spain, in the midst of a grand three day fiesta, and had difficulty in finding hotel accommodations. After much scouting about we engaged quarters in a supposedly first class hotel and leaving our luggage to be sent to the room we went out for dinner and the theatre. On returning late we discovered they had assigned us to a spacious unheated barnlike room in the annex, with stone floor, and smudgy walls and ceiling. It looked like an old converted store room, facing on a cobblestone street where the rumbling traffic outside, even at that late hour, was so deafening it would have been impossible to sleep. When we turned back the thin bed covers the sheets felt damp, cold and clammy. And so, without unpacking our bags we paid for the night's lodging and went out looking for a taxi, which we had the good fortune to find, and I asked the driver to take us to the best hotel in town. He shook his head and looked at us dubiously. However, the price of a fare intrigued him and off we went. In the lobby of the big hotel where he landed us there were no less

than forty persons, men, women and children, sleeping on settees, chairs and other makeshift devices. When I approached the clerk and in my broken Spanish asked for a room he shrugged and shook his head. "*No hay lugar!*" (meaning there was none to be had). I insisted that my wife's condition was such that she couldn't sleep out on the sidewalk in the rain, and with that I slipped an American ten dollar bill into his hand. The effect was magical. He asked us to wait, then disappeared for a few minutes. At length he returned, and with a broad smile he motioned us to follow him. He led us up one flight into a luxurious steam-heated apartment furnished with draperies, tapestries, paintings and all modern equipment. In expressing my delight, I said, "*Muchos gracias, muchos gracias, Señor.*" As he turned to go I remarked in my stumbling Spanish, "You are a model of blue-blooded Spanish hospitality."

He laughed. Then, in perfectly good American English, he said, "Thank you, but, like yourself, I happen to be a red-blooded American. The owner of this suite is out of the city for the night."

In most foreign countries American tourists are looked on as "easy picking," and the natives

fleece you as if they expected never to see you again.

However, since Marguerite's yen for migration was innate, habitual and insatiable, in keeping my promise to make her happy I trailed along and pretended to like it. I don't mean by this to make any claim to martyrdom, for Marguerite's loving comradeship outweighed all the discomforts of travel. A peculiar quirk in her nature was, that while she was always tickled to get back home, early in the fall her old wanderlust would creep over her again. On the long ocean voyages her happiness was at its zenith. She used to say that her greatest ambition was to own a big transoceanic steamer and spend her winters sailing back and forth across the water. One of the outstanding traits of her wonderful nature was her disposition always to share her joys with others. She absorbed happiness easily, she gave it out generously, and it came back to her like the proverbial bread cast upon the waters. If her winters were given to pleasure-seeking her summers were more fruitfully spent. She devoted herself to Red Cross work, and particularly to poor children. At her suggestion I built a large bungalow on our farm to accommodate twenty children. She furnished it with all the necessary equipment and arranged with five chari-

table organizations, each to send out groups of fifteen to twenty children for a two weeks summer outing, as our guests. She attended to supplying them with all their provisions — vegetables, milk, butter, eggs, cereals, bread, meat (three times a week), and fish on Fridays. She looked after their comforts, joined in their games, sang songs with them and gladdened their hungry hearts as if they were her own home brood.

Each group had its interesting characters. Several little boys used to hover around my farmer at milking time, staring wide-eyed at the cows. Many of them had never seen such a critter before. Prior to going to the charity home, few of them had ever slept between sheets. One little fellow, almost blind, was the most cheerful, talkative one in his group. He was so happy to be allowed with the other children, instead of being sent to an institution for the blind. One was badly crippled as a result of a harsh beating at the hands of a brutal, drunken father. A little bright-eyed youngster who had lost both legs, managed to propel himself by his arms and scamper about as lively as anyone on the place. I was pathetically interested one day in hearing some little crippled girls in the group from the New England Peabody Home, all laughing and chattering hope-

fully about the good times in store for them when they grew up and could have their fill of ice cream sodas and go out with sweethearts to dancing parties, movies and other amusements. Never a word of complaint.

At the end of each two weeks session, Marguerite invited the group over to our house and treated them to a farewell cake and ice cream supper. They were a cheerful, grateful lot, always playing games and singing songs, some of which they composed in our honor. Marguerite even gave piano lessons to some of the little girls who showed a bent for music. Year after year these performances were repeated, and thus her summers passed quickly, happily and usefully.

And withal, Marguerite never slackened her complete devotion and attentiveness to every little detail contributing to my welfare. She was a fond mother, and took great joy and pride in our handsome boy. She declared that in all her girlhood dreams she had never hoped to enjoy such a full and happy life. She loved life. She also loved to be loved. So did I, for that matter. We never got bored with each other, summer or winter. In fact we never had much time for boredom. Our winters were a perennial honeymoon, and our summers were periods of recuperation. I doubt if two people were ever

more happily mated. We settled all our differences by compromise and peaceful solution. If she wanted to go to Paris, and I wanted to go to Palm Beach, we compromised by going to Paris.

But as all good things, including life itself, must eventually come to an end, our happy honeymoon was no exception to that unalterable rule. This holiday life was but a prelude to a heartrending finale which lurked not far in the offing.

When our country entered World War II our boy quit Law School and entered the Air Corps. He was offered a desk job in Washington, but he preferred to get into action where he could better serve our cause. He began his primary training in Douglas, Georgia, and later won his wings as a lieutenant in another training camp in the South. From there he was transferred to Fort Myers, Florida, as an instructor-pilot. Marguerite and I took a house in Fort Myers and spent the winter with him. He was later sent to Savannah as a test pilot, and from there to Kellogg Field to train for overseas service. Meanwhile, he had been promoted to a captaincy and flew a B-26 Bomber to England where he spent several weeks training and waiting for D-Day. When that time finally arrived the first day he made three bomb-

ing missions across the Channel to the French coast, and returned uninjured, though his plane was shot full of holes and three of his crew were killed. It seemed as if he were blessed with a charmed life. While in England he fell in love with a beautiful girl and engaged to marry her when he had completed the required number of sorties entitling him to an extended furlough. Later he was transferred to France and made forty-odd missions, bombing many parts of Germany. Then on November 21st, 1944, while leading a formation of thirty-six bombers (his very last mission before receiving his furlough) he was shot down and killed over a town in Germany. With one exception (the tail-gunner) the entire crew perished. By a singular decree of fate, out of the thirty-six planes, his leading ship was the only one that suffered any casualties.

And then in quick succession came another and more terrible heart-breaker. We were seated at the fireside in a New York apartment one stormy night early in December, while the wind-driven rain and sleet pelted noisily against the window panes. Three days after receiving the War Department's delayed telegram, as we sat trying vainly to reconcile ourselves to this awful tragedy, my darling Mar-

guerite reeled from her chair and *dropped dead!*

For a few moments it seemed as if the light of my life had suddenly gone out, leaving me blinded and stupefied. I had been so long accustomed to seeing only the gaieties of life that I was totally unprepared for this double-tragedy, which deprived me of my family and left me to face life alone.

After the funeral, bereft of my normal senses, I wandered aimlessly about like a victim of amnesia, neither knowing nor caring where fate led me. Finally I discovered myself in Palm Beach, but I found no surcease of sorrow there. In looking about over the throng of merrymakers at the Everglades Club, all dining, laughing and dancing with carefree abandon, I felt like a discordant note in a gay orchestral ensemble. And so, in the early spring I returned to Boston. One of the most difficult problems that confronted me was in trying to decide whether I could endure going to the farm and face the things that Marguerite's industry had created.

It's all very well for friends to say, "Have courage, be brave, keep your chin up"; but when your underpinning is knocked completely from under you and the world seems to have caved in from all sides it's easier for well-mean-

ing friends to advise than it is to rise and readjust yourself.

Early in May following Marguerite's death I made up my mind (what little of it there was left) that I might as well face the inevitable and go out to the farm. After some thought I cozened myself into the belief that it might be comforting to be near the things Marguerite had loved. But on entering the house I became aware that I had deceived myself into a false conclusion. The loneliness, the desolation of our once cheerful home, but now destitute of every livable feature! It would have been much easier for me if the house with all its furnishings had burned to the ground.

Nobody likes a gloom-bird. Most people have enough troubles and sorrows of their own, without listening to the wails of others. And yet there are many, including myself, who like to hear how others feel and act under great pressure. Therefore in writing a true life history — as in the present case — both sides of the picture ought to be shown, revealing the alternate comedy and tragedy of life, and the resultant emotions. It would be a monotonous, undramatic life that has no contrasting emotions — all joy and no sadness. In tragedy and grief lies the drama of real life, of which we find ample proof in the works of the old Greek

dramatists. Also in Grand Opera. After all its tender love scenes and inspiring music it has to end in tragedy. And thus, because it pictures the realities of life it will always enchant wherever normal life exists. One of the most pathetic, yet appealing scenes in all Grand Opera is the mad scene in Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor." It gives me an aching heart every time I hear that agonizing, grief-revealing aria; and yet it's my favorite operatic scene. In a recent performance where Miss Munsell rendered this difficult aria more feelingly than I had ever heard it, it affected me so visibly that I felt ashamed of my weakness. But my embarrassment was somewhat mitigated in observing that the woman sitting next was no less affected. She turned to me with sympathizing eyes and tearful sniffles. At the conclusion of the aria she took out her compact, and while she was powdering her nose she remarked to her escort, "That song always gets my goat!"

Tragedy and sorrow may lie dormant for a while, but sooner or later they will crop up in one form or another to torment most of us. Contact with one or the other, or both, is almost unescapable. In other words, there's no such thing as escaping reality, or running away from a grief-stricken heart.

A famous philosopher once said that a writer

who descants on sorrowful topics makes a sorry appeal to his readers. He may have enjoyed a singular life, but he might have added, per contra, that happiness, smugness and a devil-may-care attitude, with no attendant sorrow, frustration or *mésalliance* make unsavory story-book reading, since these elements are as common in life, and as essential to one's enjoyment of a true story, as seasoning is needful in food. Therefore, in realistic narrative it is important to show the usual human reactions to sorrow and let the reader discover for himself whether or not he's getting a palatable ration; or if perchance there is anything reminiscent of his own experience. There is nothing that brings you more closely in sympathy with an author than to find him (or her) voicing your own sentiments and describing memorable episodes and yearnings in your own life. We frequently read passages that almost provoke a suspicion that the other fellow is plagiarizing our own private ideas; but after all, most every idea and happenstance in life has been surmised, experienced or written about by someone or other. This is especially true of tragedy, sorrow and pain.

The first part of my story was easy and pleasant to write; but the climax is a painful task. I hope it will be less painful to read than it is to write. It's almost impossible to unbosom

one's personal sorrows to strangers without being accused of lacking in mental stamina; or even worse, indulging in self-pity. Therefore I shall refrain from trying to describe my feelings on entering the home that seemed more like an empty mausoleum than a refuge for the living. Perhaps my reactions can better be imagined than described. At least those who have suffered a similar fate will need no detailed rehearsal.

I am not writing this story to parade my former happiness or my present grief. I am writing it as a loving tribute to one of the dearest mates with which God ever blessed mortal man. In doing so I regret the necessity of mingling sadness with gladness.

And reverting to our boy I quote the following excerpt from a letter I received from Major General Edward F. Witsell: "I have the honor to inform you that, by direction of the President, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, one Silver and three Bronze Oak-leaf Clusters, representing eight additional awards of the Air Medal, have been posthumously awarded to your son. The citations are as follows:

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on 13 June, 1944. As lead

pilot of a formation of B-26 type aircraft, your son demonstrated outstanding courage and ability when he led his formation on successive bomb runs while attacking a heavily defended enemy installation. When his bombardier was unable to pick out the assigned target because of the intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire encountered on the first run, your son, displaying great courage and fortitude, continued on to make a second bombing run enabling the bombardier to locate the target and bomb it with telling effect. Executing violent evasive action he then led the formation out of the danger area and safely back to base."

I also received half a dozen medals and citations, including a glowing tribute signed by the President. All of which was gratifying in a way, but it didn't bring back my boy, and it didn't bring back my lovely Marguerite who died from the shock of losing him. Her joking remark, at the time of our engagement, that thirty years was as long as she cared to live was strangely prophetic. She lived only thirty years from the date of that remark.

I spent the summer at the farm, because I knew of no other place where I could have the bodily comforts to which I had been accustomed. I never liked being anywhere alone; and the idea of traveling alone was unthinkable.

Where could I go? What could I do? I couldn't bear to eat alone in the big dining room with Marguerite's empty place before me, so I had my meals served in the kitchen, where at least there was some companionship.

No one who has not been pampered, humored and spoiled, as I had been for nearly thirty years, can be expected to imagine what the sudden loss of an adorable helpmate and a promising son means to one well advanced in years. In losing Marguerite I learned there is apt to be a disadvantage in having a ministering angel attend to all your little needs and desires. It promotes a sort of childlike dependence. (I know a married man who, perhaps for this reason, prefers to wait on himself.) Then when the good angel is gone and you are thrown back on your own resources you encounter many duties and objects reminiscent of your beloved. Preceding services, pastimes and acts of devotion loom up in their absence as daily reminders of your loss. For example, I never insert the cuff-links in my sleeves, or select a shirt or a tie to put on, or pack a bag to go anywhere, without missing the one who always performed these services for me. I never look at the card table or the backgammon board without being reminded of the one with whom I spent happy hours playing contract bridge, gin rummy and

backgammon. Also I recall that whenever I had to get dressed for some special occasion, Marguerite would always lay out my complete attire. Once she said to me, "I'm proud of my husband and want him always to be well groomed." All such things are hard to forget. I wonder how many others feel the same way.

In daytime I could busy myself about the place, working in the garden and the orchard, but at night it was gloomy enough, alone with my servants in that big eighteen room house with all its memories — where everything bespoke better days. The living room walls seemed to close me in like the bars of a lonely prison cell. There was more sadness than cheer in such mementos as window draperies, lampshades, sofa cushions, knickknacks and other accessories, all conceived and arranged by my darling's industry and devotion. There is no pain more distressing than a lonely bereaved heart. Her image, in thought, was everywhere about the house among the objects she created and loved. In the music room her rosewood Steinway Grand piano was shrouded and silent. It looked as lonesome as I felt, in the absence of its loving performer. I lifted the cover and struck a few chords just to assure it that it was not entirely alone. If I entered her dressing room, or her bedchamber, or wherever I

went, a ghostly voice seemed to whisper, "Marguerite is not here! Marguerite has gone away!" It was weird, fantastic, unbelievable.

One rainy night, in a sort of bewildering daze I tiptoed into her bedchamber, hoping it had all been a ghastly dream, and I'd find her cuddled up, asleep. It was dark. For a moment I stood at the bedside, listening. It seemed as if I could hear her breathing; then I reached over and touched the covers to see if she were really there. But alas! the bed was empty! My ears had deceived me. She had gone — gone forever! I went out and quietly closed the door. After that I never opened it.

Although it's a sad mistake to immure oneself, I was in no fit condition to entertain any of my friends. Whenever they called it opened up memories of the dinner parties and many other happy events of bygone days. It was like ripping open a wound that refused to heal. At night if I tried to read, my mind was elsewhere and nothing interested me. If I tried to write, my brain refused to function. If I turned on the radio, like as not I'd be greeted by a doleful songster bellowing some mournful dirge, such as "*All Alone!*" And one night they tortured me with John McCormack's famous song, "I Hear You Calling Me, And On Your Grave The Mossy Grass Is Green." These words,

which I had always thought beautifully tender and sentimental, now gave me an acute memory pang like a stab in the heart. Then some zealous commentator would rave on and on extolling the super-duper virtues of some soap powder, toothpaste, cigarette, hand lotion, hair tonic, or what not — a dozen or more wares in which I hadn't the slightest interest. After a boring hour or so I'd turn off the darn thing and wander up to my lonely bed.

It isn't a cheerful experience to contemplate; it isn't a happy theme to write about, but it's life — hard, gruesome, realistic life — the aftermath of a devastating war in which thousands upon thousands have lost their loved ones, their homes, their fortunes, and even the courage to live.

One night I went in to Boston to see a play (advertised as a comedy), hoping to get some temporary release from my thoughts. In the very first act the character after whom the play was named died suddenly of heart failure, and was carried off stage into an adjoining room. I stayed on, wondering if he had only fainted and would soon recover so they could go on with the play, but he never did recover — and during the ensuing performance I almost envied him. As the play continued, the grief-stricken actors went about, mopping their eyes

and telling one another what a swell guy he had been. One of them shouted, "What are we all blubbering about? Ain't he a lot happier than we are?" It struck me there was some logic in that. It looked as if the play had fallen to pieces, owing to the death of the leading man, and each player felt free to abandon the script and babble whatever he (or she) thought might keep the audience in their seats. Several visiting friends and relatives came in, and bowing their heads reverently they wiped their tearful eyes as they passed into the adjoining room to mourn over the corpse. . . . And the play was meant to be funny!! My flickering sense of humor compelled me to agree with the author.

I tried playing golf, but I was not up to my old time form, and the game had lost its zest. I tried to console myself with the thought that after all, a man who has enjoyed so many years of uninterrupted happiness with a God-given mate has but little cause to complain against fate; but that didn't help much, either.

I sold the farm and auctioned off the furnishings, all except Marguerite's beautiful Steinway Grand piano. I couldn't permit that to go into the hands of strangers. Finally, I pensioned two servants who had served me faithfully all through my married life. A friend suggested that I buy a smaller place with fur-

nishings that didn't revive sad memories. "No," I said, "I'm all through with such life. A drowning man who has been dragged out of the river would be foolish to plunge back in again."

Incidentally, anyone who imagines that the fates have treated him too harshly should visit the New England Peabody Home for Crippled Children, Newton, Mass., and see the seventy or so little unfortunates, many of them bandaged and strapped on cushioned frames, hopelessly maimed for life; and yet the most cheerful, the most *beautiful*, smiling, bright-eyed group of youngsters I have ever seen anywhere in the world. There is such a helpful, cheery atmosphere in this wonderful institution that the visitor feels inspired rather than depressed. If you smile and touch the cheek of one of these bandaged and bestrapped darlings it will instantly return your smile and eagerly clutch your hand. It makes one ashamed to complain. It also reminds one that there is a great and useful mission in life, even for those who have lost their homes and their loved ones.

Again, if anyone thinks he is the victim of Lady Fortune's frowning disfavor he should read Anne Morrow Lindbergh's tremendously interesting article on Edward Sheldon in the January, 1947, issue of the Reader's Digest,

entitled "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met." Also the most extraordinary example of great genius, great suffering and great fortitude that *I* have ever known. This reminded me that my wife, a few years younger than Edward Sheldon, was his dinner partner at a banquet given in his honor after the Broadway success of his play written while he was a student at Harvard. Many years later when Marguerite learned that he was stricken and helplessly bedridden with arthritis and total blindness she called on him, giving only her married name. She said, "I don't suppose you remember me, Mr. Sheldon."

He put out his hand, which she took and held for a moment, while he seemed to meditate. "Indeed I do," he said, calling her by her maiden name.

Bereavement is sometimes a reminder of neglected duty. It occasionally happens that a great sorrow will cause one to realize that he has been somewhat remiss in discharging certain duties incumbent on those with ample means. And so it happened to me. After nursing my grief for a while it occurred to me that for nearly thirty years I had lived a more or less selfish life in which my chief concern was the comfort and happiness of myself and my little family. Since God had blessed me abundantly

He may have intended I should impart to others who were less fortunate a more generous share of the blessings He had bestowed on me; so perhaps He took this means of reminding me that I had been a bit derelict in my duties. And from this thought I gained courage to carry on and try to make up for my delinquency in former years. I feel sure that Marguerite's heavenly spirit will support me in this endeavor, and I look forward, hopefully, to a happy union with her in a less troubled sphere. Meantime, I offer her spirit this greeting: —

My Marguerite, I love your name.
I miss you, dear, wherever I am;
But since you're free from grief and pain
I would not call you back again.



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